

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 185961

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 611 - JULY 21, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING  
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY  
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. EGYPT. PRESIDENT SADAT IS SCHEDULED TO MAKE HIS WIDELY HERALDED "SURPRISE" ANNOUNCEMENT TOMORROW IN A SPEECH COMMEMORATING THE JULY 1952 REVOLUTION. ANXIOUS TO SILENCE CHARGES THAT HE HAS RETREATED FROM HIS POLICY OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION, SADAT IS LIKELY TO UNVEIL PLANS FOR A NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURE. FEW SOPHISTICATED EGYPTIANS WILL BE PERSUADED OF HIS SINCERITY, HOWEVER, UNLESS HE GOES WELL BEYOND THE STRUCTURAL CHANGES THAT ARE RUMORED TO BE IN THE OFFING. ALTHOUGH SADAT AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE SAID THE "SURPRISE" WILL PERTAIN ONLY TO DOMESTIC MATTERS, HE HAS HINTED THAT THE STATUS OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS MAY ALSO BE COVERED IN HIS SPEECH.

2. SADAT HAS BEEN DISTURBED BY CRITICISM--PARTICULARLY IN THE US--OVER HIS RECENT POLITICAL CRACKDOWN AND WOULD LIKE TO COUNTERACT THE IMPRESSION THAT HE ARBITRARILY CONTROLS POLITICAL ACTIVITY. AT THE SAME TIME, HE SEEMS DETERMINED TO MUTE INTERNAL OPPOSITION TO HIS NEGOTIATING CONFIDENTIAL

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STRATEGY WITH ISRAEL AND HIS DOMESTIC STEWARDSHIP. PURSUIT OF THESE SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTIONARY OBJECTIVES HAS LED HIM TO CONSIDER SEVERAL FORMULAS, RANGING FROM AN "AMERICAN-STYLE" PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM WITH A BICAMERAL LEGISLATURE AND TWO POLITICAL PARTIES TO SIMPLY CHANGING THE GROUND RULES AND PERSONALITIES IN THE CURRENT MULTI-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM.

3. WE ARE NOT SURE HOW SWEEPING THE CHANGES WILL BE, ALTHOUGH MOST SOURCES REPORT THAT THE UNPOPULAR PRIME MINISTER SALIM WILL BE SIDELINED AND THAT SADAT WILL EITHER ASSUME THE POST HIMSELF OR ABOLISH IT. THE NATION-WIDE "DIALOGUE" INITIATED BY SADAT ON A NEW CODE OF POLITICAL ETHICS--WHICH HAS BEEN MET WITH GREAT APATHY--WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN GREATER GOVERNMENT DISCIPLINE OF OPPOSITION PARTIES AND THEIR PRESS.

4. SADAT MAY WELL USE THE CODE AS A PRETEXT FOR RECONSTITUTING AND ASSUMING DIRECT LEADERSHIP OF THE CURRENT CENTRIST PARTY, WHICH IS WIDELY REGARDED AS WEAK AND UNDISCIPLINED. THE FORM AND NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL PARTIES PERMITTED UNDER THE NEW SYSTEM WILL BE OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE IN THE SHORT TERM AS LONG AS THE PRESIDENT'S MOST ARTICULATE CRITICS REMAIN BARRED FROM POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

5. SADAT WILL PROBABLY PLAY UP GUARANTEES OF PERSONAL FREEDOMS, WHICH MAY INDEED BE ENHANCED, BUT PUBLIC DEBATE

AND THOSE WHO STIMULATE IT--MOST NOTABLY FORMER NASIR  
CONFIDANT MOHAMMED HAYKAL ON THE LEFT AND OLD-LINE LEADERS  
OF THE RIGHTIST NEW WAFD PARTY--ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN  
OUTSIDE THE ACCEPTABLE "CODE."

6. IN ADDITION TO SEEKING TO REFURBISH HIS IMAGE, SADAT  
MAY WANT TO PUT EGYPT'S POLITICAL HOUSE IN ORDER SO IT  
CAN BETTER WITHSTAND THE TENSIONS THAT WOULD RESULT FROM  
THE COLLAPSE OF HIS JERUSALEM INITIATIVE OR THE ADVENT OF  
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A DELICATE PHASE IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. IT WOULD THUS  
NOT BE SURPRISING IF HE USED THE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS  
AND THE UNVEILING OF HIS DOMESTIC PLANS TO DISCUSS THE  
DIRECTION OF PEACE INITIATIVES. (CONFIDENTIAL)

7. ISRAEL. DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS--  
ESPECIALLY THE MEETINGS WHICH WEIZMAN AND PERES CONDUCTED  
WITH SADAT--HAVE CREATED A TENSE POLITICAL SITUATION WITH  
ISRAEL. THESE TENSIONS EXPLODED DURING AN UNUSUALLY  
HEATED KNESSET SESSION ON JULY 19. BEGIN, WHO HAS LONG  
BEEN IRRITATED BY SADAT'S REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE WITH HIM,  
IS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED THAT WEIZMAN AND PERES ARE  
ACTING IN A MANNER CONTRARY TO ISRAEL'S NATIONAL INTEREST.  
BEGIN IS APPREHENSIVE LEST PERES AND WEIZMAN UNWITTINGLY  
FOSTER WHAT MANY ISRAELIS PERCEIVE AS SADAT'S CAMPAIGN TO  
PAINT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT AS INTRANSIGENT, AS A PRELUDE  
TO BRINGING US PRESSURE TO BEAR AGAINST ISRAEL.

8. BEGIN'S CONTEMPT FOR WHAT HE CONSIDERS WEIZMAN'S  
POLITICAL NAIVETE IS EXACERBATED BY A GROWING FEELING  
THAT WEIZMAN'S CONDUCT IS BECOMING INTOLERABLE. WEIZMAN'S  
DISMISSAL OR RESIGNATION IS BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY  
LIKELY PROSPECT.

9. BEGIN AND HIS ASSOCIATES GIVE SIGNS OF REGARDING  
PERES' ACTIONS AS WHOLLY IMPROPER, IF NOT NEAR-  
TREASONABLE. HERUT LEADERS BELIEVE THAT IN ORDER TO  
PROMOTE HIS PERSONAL POLITICAL AMBITION PERES IS  
JEOPARDIZING ISRAELI STANDING IN THE US, UNDERMINING THE  
GOVERNMENT'S BARGAINING POWER, AND ENCOURAGING SADAT TO  
CONTINUE TO REFUSE TO DEAL WITH BEGIN.

10. BEGIN BELIEVES THAT HE BEHAVED MORE PATRIOTICALLY  
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WHEN HE WAS IN THE OPPOSITION THAN PERES IS NOW DOING.  
IN BEGIN'S VIEW, PERES IS BLURRING THE REAL DIFFERENCE  
BETWEEN SADAT'S POSITION AND THE LABOR PARTY'S. THIS  
ALARMS BEGIN BECAUSE HE FEARS THAT IT WILL ENCOURAGE SADAT

AND THE US TO PRESS FOR A NEAR-TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL IN THE EXPECTATION THAT THIS WOULD BE ATTAINABLE UNDER A LABOR GOVERNMENT. BEGIN MAY ALSO FEAR THAT PERES MIGHT JETTISON LONG-HELD LABOR POSITIONS IN ORDER TO MAKE PEACE, THOUGH THIS IS MOST UNLIKELY.

11. THE PRIME MINISTER'S ANGER AT PERES IS AGGRAVATED BY THE FACT THAT PERES HIMSELF, UP UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR, WAS THE LEADER OF THE HAWKISH WING OF THE LABOR PARTY AND A LONG-TIME OPPONENT OF TERRITORIAL PARTITION OF THE WEST BANK. IT SEEMS TO BEGIN AS IF THE "OPPORTUNISTIC" PERES IS WINNING INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM FOR HIS LACK OF PRINCIPLES, WHILE BEGIN IS CASTIGATED BECAUSE HE REMAINS TRUE TO HIS BELIEFS.

12. BEGIN IS ALSO CONCERNED AT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ACTIONS OF PERES AND WEIZMAN FOR BEGIN'S IMAGE WITHIN ISRAEL. HE HAS ALWAYS PRIDED HIMSELF ON HIS STRENGTH AND DECISIVE LEADERSHIP ABILITIES, AND HE MUST BE HORRIFIED AT THE PROSPECT THAT HE MAY BE REGARDED AS GOING THE WAY OF THE INDECISIVE RABIN, A MAN HE REGARDS WITH CONTEMPT.

13. BEGIN HAS BEEN AFFRONTED BY WEIZMAN'S LATEST ACTS-- HIS REPORTED RIPPING A PEACE POSTER OFF THE WALL OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND DENOUNCING THE CABINET FOR NOT WANTING PEACE, AND HIS REPORTED OUTBURSTS AT LAST SUNDAY'S CABINET MEETING AGAINST MINISTERS SHARON AND HOROWITZ. BEGIN MUST SEE THESE ACTIONS AS A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S AUTHORITY AND PRESTIGE.

14. OTHER POLITICAL FORCES ARE AT WORK. SHARON, WHO HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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BECOME WEIZMAN'S FOE, IS APPARENTLY ATTEMPTING TO BESMIRCH WEIZMAN AND SECURE THE LATTER'S DISMISSAL. HOROWITZ, WHO IS DAYAN'S COUSIN AND PRINCIPAL SUPPORTER WITHIN THE CABINET, IS SIMILARLY ATTEMPTING TO MAKE LIFE UNBEARABLE FOR WEIZMAN TO THE BENEFIT OF HIS RELATIVE. DAYAN HIMSELF IS UNDOUBTEDLY SEEKING AT THE VERY LEAST TO HAVE WEIZMAN'S WINGS CLIPPED.

15. AN IMPORTANT QUESTION IN COMING WEEKS WILL BE WHETHER OR NOT THE MEDIATING EFFORTS OF THE LIBERAL AND NRP LEADERS WILL SUCCEED IN DEFERRING WEIZMAN'S DISMISSAL OR RESIGNATION. WEIZMAN'S REMOVAL AT THIS STAGE, HOWEVER, WHILE DRAMATIC, WOULD NOT BE LIKELY TO CREATE A MAJOR POLITICAL CRISIS. HIS POPULARITY, ALTHOUGH BROAD, IS NOT DEEP. IT COULD VANISH QUICKLY IF HE WERE TO LOSE OFFICE. IN ANY EVENT, THE POPULARITY OF BOTH WEIZMAN AND PERES AS SUCH COUNTS FOR LITTLE IN THE ISRAELI POLITICAL SYSTEM. IT IS THE HOLDERS OF THE BALANCE OF POWER--ESPECIALLY THE

NRP AND THE LIBERAL PARTY--WHO WILL DETERMINE FUTURE POLITICAL CONFIGURATIONS. WE EXPECT THESE VETERAN POLITICAL ORGANISMS TO BEHAVE WITH THEIR CUSTOMARY PRUDENCE AND CAUTION.

16. EMBASSY TEL AVIV REPORTS THAT IN SHARP CONTRAST TO RECENT PERFORMANCES IN WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER APPEARED FRAIL AND FAILING, HE APPEARED ENERGETIC AND WELL DURING HIS CONFRONTATION WITH PERES IN WEDNESDAY'S KNESSET DEBATE. THE SESSION WAS MOST NOTEWORTHY FOR BEGIN'S REMARKABLE PERFORMANCE. SOME OF HIS OPPONENTS FOUND THE CONTRAST UNCOMFORTABLE AND CAUSTICALLY REFERRED TO A NEW "MANIAC" BEGIN. ON THE OTHER HAND, MK LINN (LA'AM) EXPLAINED THAT THIS SUDDEN INCREASE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S ENERGY

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EVEL IS THE RESULT OF A RECENT CHANGE IN MEDICATION. "WE HAVE A NEW PRIME MINISTER," HE SAID, " AND ALL THE WORLD MUST KNOW."

17. ISRAEL'S UN AMBASSADOR HERZOG, WHO IS SOON TO CONCLUDE HIS TERM, REVIEWED ISRAEL'S POSITION AT THE UN IN A CONVERSATION WITH OUR NEW YORK MISSION. HE BELIEVES THAT THE POLITICAL CLIMATE TOWARD ISRAEL AT THE UN HAS IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE 1975. AT THAT TIME, HE SAID, THE "ZIONISM AS RACISM" RESOLUTION AND A RADICAL ARAB EFFORT TO OUST ISRAEL FROM THE UN CONFRONTED HIS COUNTRY IN THAT FORUM, BUT NOW NEITHER ISSUE IS ON THE AGENDA. HERZOG PERSONALLY BELIEVES THAT ISRAEL HAS UNDERESTIMATED THE POTENTIAL OF THE UN AS A WAY OF INFLUENCING WORLD OPINION. REGARDING UNIFIL, HE TERMED IT A SUCCESS AND SAID IT IS NOW ISRAEL'S POLICY TO SUPPORT IT. (CONFIDENTIAL) VANCE

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